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SUBJECT: OSCE JOINT FSC/PC MEETING: RESPONSE TO GENEVA  
CO-CHAIRS AND EUMM HEAD HABER

11. Post is authorized to present the following statement at the June 17, 2009, joint FSC/PC meeting in Vienna:

Begin text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

It is a pleasure to welcome our distinguished guests to today's meeting. The United States greatly appreciates the leadership of Ambassadors Morel, Verbeke, and Christopoulos in coordinating the Geneva discussions, and commends their tireless efforts to ensure constructive talks. We also appreciate Ambassador Haber's leadership of the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia, and commend the Mission's valuable engagement on the ground.

The United States firmly believes that the Geneva discussions are critical to enhancing security, respect for human rights, and stability in Georgia. We believe the European Union, the UN, and the OSCE together possess the expertise needed to tackle the challenges inherent in the process, and look forward to continued fruitful cooperation among the three organizations.

We hope the July 1 discussions in Geneva will yield concrete results, and urge all parties to demonstrate a constructive and creative approach. In advance of next month's talks, we again urge the good-faith implementation of the incident prevention and response mechanisms agreed in February, and call on all parties to allow for joint visits, together with international monitors, to the sites of incidents. We are convinced the OSCE should continue to participate in the Geneva Process, despite Russia having opposed the compromise proposed by Greece that would have prevented the OSCE Mission to Georgia from closing down.

Similarly, we deeply regret that on June 15, Russia vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have extended the current mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) by two weeks to allow for negotiations on a substantive mandate to continue. Russia objected to a reference to UN Security Council Resolution 1808, which includes an explicit statement of Council support for Georgia's territorial integrity. Russia voted in favor of 1808, and even subsequent to its August 2008 recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Russia voted for two other UN resolutions invoking Georgia's territorial integrity.

The entire international security architecture in Georgia, built up over many years to promote human rights and create conditions for the safe, voluntary return of internally displaced persons and refugees, is being undermined over one participating state's insistence that the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia be recognized by the international community as independent countries.

Despite these setbacks, we will continue to urge free and unhindered humanitarian access to the Abkhazia and South Ossetian regions of Georgia (as agreed in UNSCR 1866 last February and the August 12 cease fire agreement), the full

respect for human rights of all individuals in the conflict areas, and the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of internally displaced persons.

The EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia is a crucial stabilizing factor, and plays a key role in the implementation of the incident prevention and response mechanisms. It also is critical to the international community's efforts to monitor compliance with the August 12 cease-fire agreement and the subsequent implementing measures of September 8. Unfortunately, these efforts cannot be fully effective as long as Russia denies international observers access to the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia.

Accordingly, we repeat our call for Russia to honor the commitments it made in the August 12 and September 8 agreements, which call for Russia not only to provide free and unhindered humanitarian access to the South Ossetian and Abkhaz regions, but also to withdraw its troops to positions and numbers held prior to the start of hostilities. We remind Russia of its responsibility to ensure respect for human rights and international humanitarian law in those areas of Georgia under Russian occupation.

We note once more that many Russian actions in Georgia, such as its establishment of military bases in the breakaway regions and its deployment of FSB border guards to the

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administrative boundary lines, have undermined rather than enhanced stability in the region. The same holds true for Russia's decision to reject the Greek Chairmanship's status-neutral proposal for a continued OSCE presence in Georgia, and to force the departure of the OSCE Mission to Georgia and its valuable military monitoring officers.

Madam Chairwoman, we have said before that if we cannot effectively address and resolve issues like these, it is unlikely we will make any genuine headway on a Europe that is more secure and at peace. Progress would help restore trust and confidence and facilitate any discussion of European security -- and would be most welcome as we approach the informal ministerial meeting in Corfu.

In closing, the United States again thanks the ambassadors here today, and commends their extraordinary work. We remain committed to finding a peaceful resolution to the conflicts in Georgia, and will continue to support Georgia's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.  
CLINTON